

Projected Implications of Education for All in Fiji

Navneel Shalendra Prasad*, Asa Romeo Asa

School of Management, Wuhan University of Technology, #205 Luoshi Road, Wuhan, P.R. China, 430070

* E-mail of the corresponding author: navi_7237@hotmail.com

Abstract

As Fiji moves to a free and continuous education till Year 12, it is important to look at the implications than being blinded by the lights. This research paper is based on the hypothesis that at least ninety percent of all students will further their education which is confirmed and thus seeks to portray the significant implications that this development will have in the future. The implications include the need for creating ample jobs to match the influx of graduates mostly in the service sector, the need for more scholarships, more opportunities for average and below-average students and further crumble of the Agriculture sector. These implications are portrayed by the response of high school students through a survey. This work has been done in order for Fiji to be ready for such situations and not undermining its current efforts which are beyond admirable. These implications if not heeded would be the counter effect of the very issues we are trying to eliminate. The limitations of this paper are that it has used opinions to paint the picture of how the future would be but it would not be possible otherwise. This brings us to knowledge that policies and developments as further as fifteen to twenty years should be laid out before such a venture in order to prevent consequences that can be devastating for small developing economies like Fiji.

Keywords: Education for All, EFA, Millennium Development Goals, MDG's, Implications, Consequences, Fiji, Free Education, Students, Examinations

1. History of Education in Fiji

Like in any other country, education in Fiji started with "traditional education" which involved knowledge sharing by parents and elders to ready children for adult hood to tackle economic and social survival. Boys learned skills such as hunting, fishing, farming and other manual tasks while girls were encouraged to activities traditionally assigned to females. Some forms of organized learning such as teaching of traditional "meke" were practiced well before the arrival of the first western settlers. (Baba, 1992) Missionaries arrived in Fiji about 170 years ago and did not recognize the traditional education system and therefore the new learning system of formal education. The 1969 Fiji Education Commission Report acknowledged that history of education in Fiji was largely a private initiative but colonial government provided funds for non-government schools and also established a few schools for specific purposes. After independence in 1970, Fiji established more schools as it needed a skilled labor force as a newly independent state. (Kedrayate, 2001)

2. Education for all in Fiji

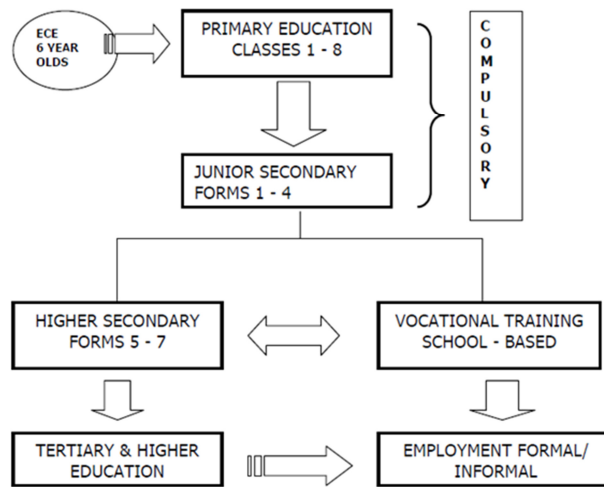
Education for all is a global commitment by UNESCO and a Millennium Development Goal of UNDP to provide quality basic education for all children youth and adults. Fiji was part of the world forum on Education for All when the EFA initiatives began in Jomtien, Thailand. At the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, six goals were identified to be met by the year 2015. EFA goal 2 states that by the year 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. (UNESCO) Fiji has initiated this goal and has successfully completed the basic requirements to achieve this goal. The access of children to full primary education means fulfilling two basic requirements that are:

- **School fees** – One of the reasons children stayed away from school was the fees charged for those parents who could not afford education. Fiji has now made education completely free for both primary and secondary schools through grants from the government.

- **Bus fare** – Another common reason for children staying away from school was the fact that parents could not afford bus fares especially for children staying in very remote places who had no access to schools. Fiji announced "bus vouchers" to and from school for children whose parents have a below par income.

The plus point here being that, Fiji not only fulfilled this for primary education but also for secondary school education as well. An achievement all Fijians should be immensely be proud of.

Figure 1: Fiji Education system outline



(Source: Education For All: Mid-Decade Assessment, Fiji 2008)

3. Examination Changes Overtime

Prior to 1989, Form 5 and 6 students used to sit for New Zealand School Certificate Examination and New Zealand University Entrance Examination respectively. In 1985, the Fiji government announced the restructuring of external examinations (Education Gazette, 1985). This eventuating as a decision by New Zealand authorities to discontinue New Zealand School Certificate and University Entrance examinations (Singh, 1985). These two examinations were replaced by Fiji School Leaving Certificate in Form 6 (Year 12) and Fiji Seventh Form Examination in Form 7 (Year 13) with no examinations for Form 5 (Year 11).

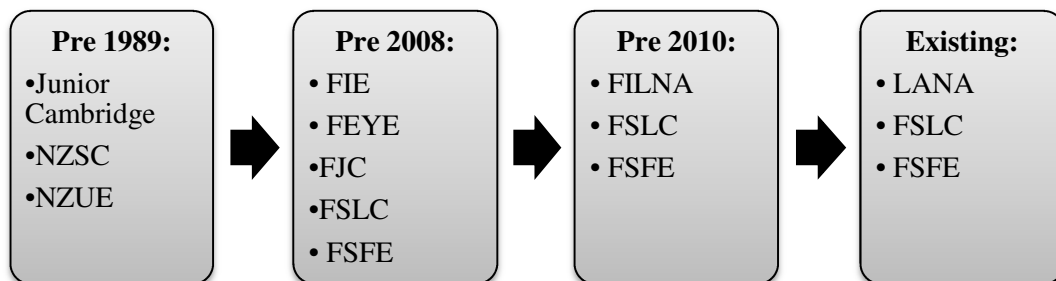


Figure 2: Changes in Examinations in Fiji overtime
 (Source: Fiji Sun)

4. Methods

4.1 Data

A study was carried out among High school students at Labasa College in Fiji in regards to their aspirations about further education after high school and how one would bring those aspirations to life. A total of 100 questionnaires were given out with a response rate of 98%.

4.2 Hypothesis

These hypothesis were developed as a theory that a free education system with transportation allowances and continuous education until Year 12 will lead to almost all age groups to attend school and well serve its purpose but looking beyond primary and high school, there are many factors that Fiji should consider and most importantly plan for the future. As more students enter school, more students will pursue further education, more graduates would enter the labor market and thus increased demand for employment. This gives rise to various issues that would need to be planned for in advance or this entire development would become an oxymoron situation.

Hypothesis 1: More than 90% of the students who are beneficiaries of Education for all, will further their education.

Hypothesis 2: More than 80% of students who are beneficiaries of Education for all, will pursue further education with or without financial support.

5. Implications

A study was carried out among High school students at Labasa College in Fiji in regards to their aspirations about further education after high school and how one would bring those aspirations to life. A total of 100 questionnaires were given out with a response rate of 98%.

5.1 Need for more employment opportunities particularly in services sector.

99% of all students indicated that they would further their education after Form 6 (Year 12) and or Form 7 (Year 13) education. This confirmed the hypothesis 1 that this paper is based on that was that every student would further their education after Year 12 and or Year 13 or Foundation studies. The implication of this theory being the need for the economy to be able to cater for all students in terms of employment opportunities as almost the entire age group would demand for employment on a yearly basis in the future. That is as soon as the first batch of EFA students in Year 1 graduate after further education. Among the students surveyed, 79% clearly indicated that

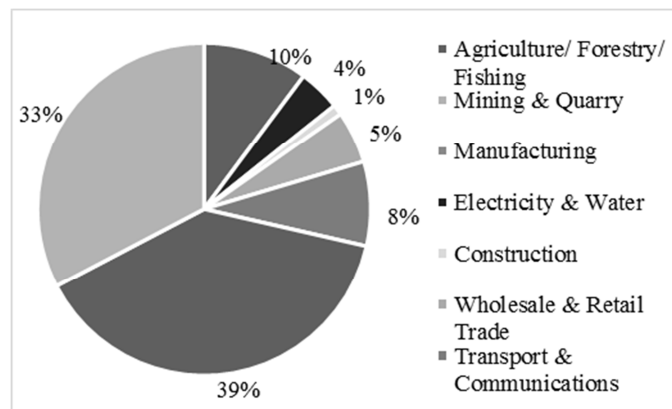


Figure 3: Desired employment by sectors

they would pursue a degree after Year 12 and or Year 13 or Foundation studies indicating that the younger generations are now solely focused on living a better life with a degree or higher and a salary earning position for job security which again shows a positive development to the Fijian economy as well as the need for more employment opportunities. 19% likely to partake into Diploma studies and 2% for Certificate studies. As portrayed in Figure 3, 39% of the students plan to join the Financial and Business sector while 33% to Community, Social & Personal services sector. Transport and Communications were chosen by 8%, 5% in Wholesale and Trade, 4% in Electricity and Water, 1% in Construction and 10% in Agriculture & Forestry & Fishing sector. The most important trend to note here is that 89% of all students chose a career path into Service sector, 10% in Primary and 1% in Secondary sector. This indicates that Fiji has come a long way in terms of development as a projected huge service sector, it indicates an economically developed country but these are just projections as the issue at hand now is whether or not Fiji will be able to accommodate these graduates in the Services sector. Like most of us, 60% of the students see themselves working as salary earners, 23% as wage earners, 15% as earning through self-employment and 2% as seasonal.

5.2 Need for a substantial increase in Scholarships

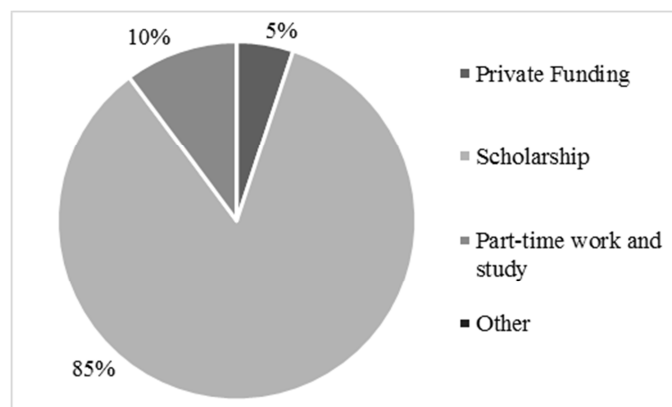
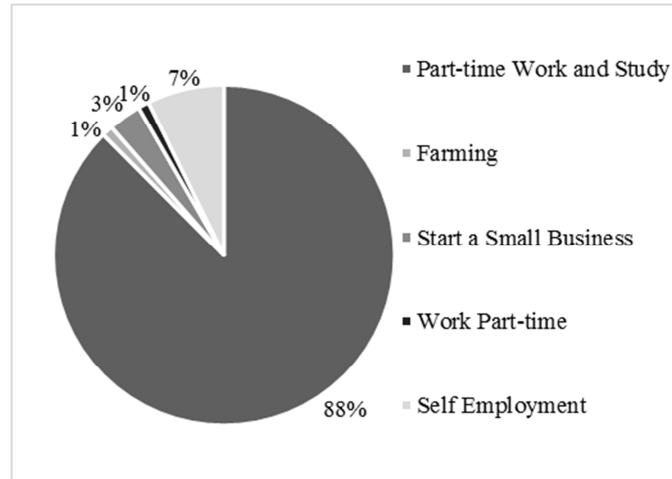


Figure 4 - Means to further Education

Figure 4 points out that 85% of the students are likely of further their education whether or not they receive a scholarship, while 10% of the students plan to pursue further education by working part time and 5% through Private means. This confirms our Hypothesis 2 and means that more and more scholarships will be needed for students as the number of students graduating from high school will increase. Students in Fiji are offered many types of scholarships that include PSC scholarship, Multi-ethnic scholarship, I-Taukei Scholarship, PSC Loan Schemes and Overseas Scholarship. These scholarships cover most of the students based on eligibility but will need to increase scholarship numbers to cater for the influx.

Figure 5 Means to further education without scholarship



If students missed out on scholarships as shown in Figure 5, 88% of them would opt to take Part-time work and study. This further gives enlightens us that students are focused and determined to further their education even if they are unable to attain scholarships. This however brings into question, the availability of part-time job opportunities that students can have to achieve this. Only 1% of these students settled for Part-time work or casual labor as a final career path while 3% planned to open a small business, 7% on other types of self-employment and a mere 1% chose to pursue farming if no scholarships were forthcoming.

99% of all students believe that there should be more opportunities available for average and below average students in terms of further education and 65% of these students indicated that these opportunities should be in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sectors as 17% wanted more opportunities in Community, Social & Personal Services sectors and 11% in Financial and Business services sectors.

5.3 Further crumbling of the Agriculture Sector

The worry in the data in Figure 3 is that only 1% of the students foresee Agriculture as an alternative career choice especially based on the importance of agriculture to Fiji especially Sugarcane and Cotton. Sugar Industry was started in the colonial days as a strategy to promote economic growth. Even after independence in 1970, Sugar was a key export and the high rates of economic growths in the 1970's were mainly due to the booming sugar industry Prasad, Yuan & Asa 2011). With the declining sugar industry due land issues and world market prices, it is a worrying sign for the industry. This might be the very reason that students have indicated in pursuing a career away from agriculture. This however is a bad news for the industry as lack of participants will further crumble an industry that is experiencing decline and needs recovery in any way possible especially with the abundant supply of fertile land and a tropical climate in Fiji.

6. Conclusion

Through this research it is possible to develop a strategic plan that helps small developing countries like Fiji to adapt to changes that the Education for All initiatives will bring. The service sector will be the major area for more employment opportunities and plans to achieve this should be made accordingly. It is clear that the other important area that Fiji has to focus on, is the Agricultural sector as the younger generation's mind-set moves away from the farmlands as shared by the history of Fiji and its contribution to its economy to white collar jobs. Fiji needs to revive its Agricultural sector in particular because of the abundance of land and a climate to produce a wide range of agricultural products as it would support Tourism as a major foreign exchange earner rather than being solely relied upon.

Abbreviations

EFA – Education for All
 MDG – Millennium Development Goals
 NZSC – New Zealand School Certificate

NZUE – New Zealand University Entrance
FIE – Fiji Intermediate Examination
FEYE – Fiji Eight Year Examination
FJC – Fiji Junior Certificate
FSLC – Fiji School Leaving Certificates
FSFE – Fiji Seventh Form Examination
CBA – Class Based Assessment
FILNA – Fiji Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
LANA – Literacy and Numeracy Assessment

References

- Baba, T. (1992) Community Education: Agenda for the Pacific in the 90s. *Paper presented at Regional Adult/Community Education. Suva*, The University of the South Pacific.
- Kedrayate, A. (2001) Why Non-Formal Education in Fiji? *Directions: Journal of Educational Studies* Vol. 23 No.1 June 2001
- Education Gazette, Ministry of Education, Fiji, Term III, 1985
- Singh, G. (1985) Examination Changes in Fiji, *Journal of Education Studies* (<http://www.directions.usp.ac.fj/collect/direct/index/assoc/D769916.dir/doc.pdf>)
- Fiji Sun* (2010) Educating Fiji: Examination free system, Ministry of Education August 13, 2010
- Education For All*, Mid-Decade Assessment, Fiji 2008
<http://www.psc.gov.fj/index.php/services/training/82-local> (Accessed 7/2/2014)
- Prasad, N. S., Guohua, Y, Asa, A. R. Fiji's Transformation from Sugar to Tourism Industry, *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Innovation & Management, 2011*, pp 1221-1224
- Ministry of Education (2010) *Educating Fiji: Examination free system*, *Fiji Sun*, August 13
<http://www.fijisun.com.fj/?p=56750> (Accessed 7/2/2014)
- Education for All, UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/> (Accessed 7/2/2014)
- The Millennium Development Goals, UNDP <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/> (Accessed 7/3/2014)